

tance includes, for instance, water conservation and power generation. In line with China's ideology these are mostly "small is beautiful" projects—whether in techniques of developing rice paddies or in sinking wells. China wants to convince other Third World nations to reach for shorter production cycles, which requires less investment and yields quicker returns.

The U.N. conference searched earnestly for some degree of consensus. The major dilemma proved to be the highly varying attitudes within the group of "77"—the so-called nonaligned nations. After a full week of quite intensive debate and behind-the-scenes bargaining, they wisely struck a pragmatic compromise at the eleventh hour. Fortunately, the agreement was also looked upon kindly by the North—and so the conference ended happily with a blueprint of action.

In a nutshell, the group of "77" concluded: (1) that only in unison could they partake in a fruitful North-South dialogue; (2) that the North would not be convinced of the need for such a dialogue unless and until the Southern countries *demonstrated* that they were capable of mutual assistance; and (3) that technical cooperation was the most immediate and pragmatic avenue of achieving such collaboration.

Notwithstanding the high-powered rhetoric, the North-South dialogue stalled after the ill-fated Conference of International Economic Cooperation (Paris—December, 1975, to June, 1977). If the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) can carry the ball that the world conference on technical cooperation started rolling, the North-South dialogue may lead to very positive action. The wind blowing from the South is getting stronger by the year. America, Europe, and Japan may well heed the age-old Chinese observation that "the bamboo bends before the wind."

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## **EXCURSUS III**

### *Edward A. Olsen on The Korean Demilitarized Zone as a Nature Preserve*

Sitting astride the midsection of the mountainous Korean peninsula is a formidable piece of real estate that symbolizes a divided nation—the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Two-and-a-half miles wide and 151 miles long, lying approximately parallel to the 38th degree of latitude, the DMZ has been in existence since the truce calling a halt to the Korean civil war was signed in 1953. Since that time the DMZ has been a no-man's land dividing implacable and heavily armed enemies. Today these

forces—Americans and troops of the Republic of Korea in the south vs. troops of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north—face each other across this isolated terrain.

Like the Berlin wall, the Korean DMZ supplies graphic evidence of a divided nation's inability to resolve its differences. In many ways the divisive DMZ is highly symbolic of the political and economic strains that afflict the Korean people. Unlike the Berlin wall, however, the Korean DMZ has become something more than an abject barricade. In the span of twenty-five years the DMZ has assumed a new identity. While literally no one was watching, this isolated region reverted to a semblance of its natural condition. With man precluded from setting foot in this approximately 375-square-mile zone, nature has held sway, reclaiming the human artifacts of war.

Though no one planned it in 1953, and few people today recognize it as such, the Korean DMZ now is a very valuable nature preserve. Civil war devastated the former farmlands and forested mountains, leaving in its wake a largely barren and scarred landscape. Left alone in one of the few areas of the world uncontaminated by herbicides and pesticides, flora and fauna have flourished.

In this area, where man cannot encroach to disturb their habitat or take their lives for sport, several species now prosper. Long-abandoned rice paddies and once ugly bomb and shell holes today provide marshy wetlands that play host to a great variety of waterfowl. Most notable are small numbers of two increasingly rare birds: the red and white Japanese ibis (which also survives on Japan's Sado Island) and the white, red, and black Manchurian crane—one of Korea's national symbols. Upland birds, especially pheasants, also thrive in the area in large numbers.

Four-legged creatures too flourish in the zone's overgrown woodlands and thickets. Rabbits proliferate freely in the many crevices left in the land by man and his machines of war. Small Asian river deer dwell in the dense foliage of the wetlands. These and other small mammals thrive in the zone, providing food for their larger neighbors. Though man, the hunter, cannot trespass in the area, the rugged hills of the DMZ are home to Korean tigers and lynx. Left in isolation, with ample small prey, these large cats also prosper.

These and other species exist outside the DMZ too, but only in ever more precarious habitats. Both South and North Korea are committed to being as agriculturally self-reliant as possible. Both too are committed to developing modern industrial economies. Neither government seems overly concerned—yet—about the impact these activities have on their natural surroundings. The impact is unmistakable: The more man encroaches on nature, the more the Korean environment suffers.

There is some concern, especially in South Korea, where the pressures of population and economic growth are greater. But what concern there is does

not have much impact where it counts most—on the political leadership of either country. With vivid memories of their recent impoverished past, with Confucian or Marxist legacies of man-centered views of nature, and long accustomed to living in a culturally shaped “natural” environment, most Koreans seem tacitly willing to sacrifice incrementally the nature fringes that still surround their living areas.

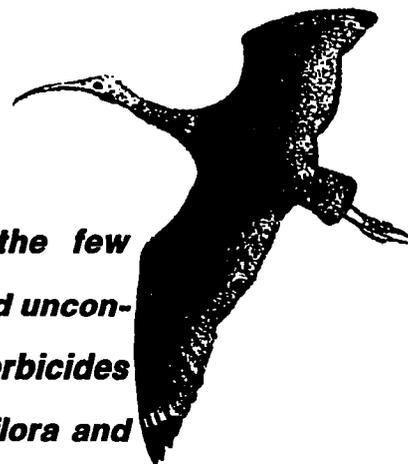
Seen in this context, it is likely that some wildlife species could not survive were the DMZ abolished and the land it occupies put to some other use. For now these species hold their own and—in excursions from the *de facto* nature preserve—foster the illusory perception that they successfully survive outside the largely unappreciated DMZ enclave. If the DMZ is ever removed from central Korea—either by negotiations or conquest—an important element in the Korean ecosystem will be obliterated.

There is no doubt that eradication of the DMZ would be a tremendous ecological loss to all of East Asia, for the zone also serves as a key stopover for Asian migratory fowl. Other nature preserves do exist in the region, but none are comparable to the DMZ in magnitude in an otherwise densely populated area. In many ways the DMZ today is an irreplaceable natural resource. There should be a guarantee that it will not be dismantled.



Pleas to protect a nature preserve are not likely to be heeded should war erupt once more on the peninsula. In that unhappy event, the only recourse would be to appeal to the victor to keep intact some of the zone as a preserve. It is uncertain whether either Seoul or Pyongyang would see such an act of ecological preservation as being in the economic interests of a reunified Korea.

Fortunately for Korea and for its *de facto* nature preserve, renewed war grows less and less likely for political reasons. Another war would cost South Korea much of its new-found economic prosperity and international prominence. Seoul has nothing to gain by initiating a war. This cannot be said of Pyongyang, which finds itself being outdistanced by



***“...in one of the few areas of the world uncontaminated by herbicides and pesticides, flora and fauna have flourished.”***

the South. However, Pyongyang is inhibited by the combined strength of South Korea and its allies and, perhaps more important, by uncertainty about the support it could expect from its allies. Though war by miscalculation always remains possible, *Realpolitik* suggests a divided Korea will remain for some time.

While the status quo is vastly superior to renewed war in both human and ecological terms, it leaves unanswered important questions about the future of the DMZ as a nature preserve. Ideally, any future negotiations on reunification of Korea would incorporate this issue. Since the two Korean states have evolved in such drastically different directions, economically and politically, a unified state seems unlikely. One solution might be for the two Koreas to retain the DMZ as a buffer zone, allowing peaceful and free access to each other's territory for trade, communication, and travel through a narrow band of land traversing the zone in an area that would be minimally harmful in ecological terms. Such a corridor could be policed and regulated by both parties, perhaps assisted by a U.N. agency.

This concept, or something similar to it, offers more than just a mechanism to rejoin gradually the divided Korean nation as a confederated state with a minimum of social trauma and upheaval. It also provides the opportunity to create—under international or bilateral auspices—a permanent and *de jure* nature preserve in the DMZ enclave. Given the support of both governments, neither of which wants to be contaminated by the other's societal ideosyncrasies, and of the international community, this permanent preserve would be a boon to Korea. Established in perpetuity, the zone would preserve Korea's natural treasures as well as its peace and stability. Today the DMZ is a symbol of Korea's political problems. If its true value is recognized, it could become a symbol of a more hopeful future.

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